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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000488

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/05/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: CHAVEZ'S STREET REVOLUTIONARIES STAGE SMALL REVOLT

REF: A. A. CARACAS 273

[B.](#) CARACAS 248

[C.](#) IIR 7 726 0053 08

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT DOWNES,  
REASON 1.4 (D)

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary: On April 3 representatives of thirty political gangs took to the streets of "23 de Enero," one of Caracas' poorest neighborhoods, to protest searches by Venezuela's investigative and intelligence service, DISIP. DISIP has carried out a series of raids and searches in the neighborhood following the February 24 bombing (Ref. B) of the FEDECAMARAS building. The 50 protesters, many masked and armed, held the ground for about five hours, establishing roadblocks, burning tires and chanting for the DISIP to leave their neighborhood. One of the organizers read a communique to the media, calling the event a "popular and revolutionary" protest against a campaign of harassment against local leader Juan Montoya. During a nation-wide address that same day, President Hugo Chavez called the protest "an act of vandalism," accusing the press of inflaming the situation and labeling the protesters as "directed by the CIA." These are however, unquestionably from the ranks of Chavez' irregulars. Chavismo's base is feeling the pain of food shortages, inflation and unemployment. This is another example of Chavista hard-liners acting independently of their political handlers and embarrassing the BRV. End Summary.

STREET FIGHTING MEN

[¶](#)2. (U) Approximately 50 protesters, many masked and openly carrying rifles, shotguns and pistols, which they occasionally fired into the air, blocked the streets of "23 de Enero" a dense, low income neighborhood of sprawling apartment blocks on April 3. Shutting the streets to public and private vehicles, the protesters, claiming to represent some 30 pro-Chavista political gangs, burned tires, scattered garbage and chanted protests against DISIP, Venezuela's investigative and intelligence police. A Metropolitan Police corporal's Glock 17 service pistol was taken by the protesters.

[¶](#)3. (U) Glen Martinez of the political gang "Combat Radio 23" read a communique calling their action "popular and revolutionary" against the "political persecution and repression" of community leader Juan Montoya by DISIP. DISIP has carried out a series of raids since "23 de Enero" resident Hector Serrano blew himself up while planting a bomb at the FEDECAMARAS building on February 24. Valentin Santana of "La Piedrita", another political gang, called Serrano "a true revolutionary" and warned that if DISIP did not stop "persecuting the true socialist fighters" they would face a "political and military response." In addition to denouncing

opposition newspapers El Nuevo Pais and El Mundo as "right-wing fascists," the protesters curiously accused Mario Silva, host of the Chavista talk show La Hojilla, of being "counter-revolutionary."

¶4. (U) While speaking on a broad range of topics during an April 3 nation-wide address, Chavez called the protest "an act of vandalism," and accused the media of inflaming the situation. He also denied any political persecution against "23 de Enero" calling Serrano's attempted bombing "terrorism." Chavez accused the CIA of having a hand in the protests in an attempt to "break the revolutionary ranks."

¶5. (C) Comment: Chavez' irregular supporters, as well as the formal "Bolivarian Circles" are frequently armed. (Ref.C) Those carrying out the demonstration are unquestionably Chavez supporters. This was not the first time that Chavismo's hard-line street ranks have departed from the script of 21st Century Socialism. Both the February 23 take over of the Papal Nuncio's residence (Ref. A) and the April 3 protest had strong undercurrents of "not enough revolution." This probably comes from Chavismo's base feeling the pain of food shortages, inflation and unemployment. This is another example, and probably not the last, of Chavista hard-liners acting independently of their political handlers and which is embarrassing the BRV.

DUDDY